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# PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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## THE DISPOSAL OF MUNICIPAL SEWAGE.

DAMAGES AWARDED AGAINST A CITY SEWER DISTRICT FOR INJURY CAUSED BY A SEWAGE-DISPOSAL PLANT.

A sewer district in the city of El Dorado, Ark., constructed a septic tank for disposing of sewage. An owner of land near the septic tank brought suit for damages, alleging injury to his property.

It was proved that offensive odors emanated from the tank and that a stream which flowed through the plaintiff's land was polluted. The evidence showed, however, that much of the pollution of the stream was caused by unnecessary flushing of the tank.

The court held that the sewer district was liable for the amount by which the value of the plaintiff's land was depreciated by reason of the construction and operation of the septic tank, but that no damages could be recovered against the municipal authorities because of the acts of employees in unnecessarily flushing the tank.

The opinion is printed in full at page 3439 of this issue of the Public Health Reports.

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## THE NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.<sup>1</sup>

### PREVALENCE DURING 1914 IN CITIES OF 10,000 TO 100,000.

DIPHTHERIA, GONORRHEA, LEPROSY, MALARIA, MEASLES, EPIDEMIC CEREBROSPINAL MENINGITIS, POLIOMYELITIS, SCARLET FEVER, SMALLPOX, SYPHILIS, TUBERCULOSIS, AND TYPHOID FEVER—CASES REPORTED, CASE RATES PER 1,000 POPULATION, AND FATALITY RATES PER 100 CASES.

In studying these tables it should be kept in mind that a relatively large number of reported cases of a communicable disease, as indicated by a high case rate (and more especially when accompanied by a relatively small number of deaths, as indicated by a low fatality rate), usually means that the health department of that city is active, and that the cases of the disease are being properly reported by the practicing physicians. It does not necessarily mean that the disease is more prevalent in that city than in other cities. A high fatality rate may mean that the disease was unusually virulent in a city, that the physicians did not treat the disease in that city with the

<sup>1</sup> The data from which these tables have been compiled were obtained from the health departments of the respective cities. It is believed that all the municipal health departments which are making a serious effort to obtain information of the occurrence of preventable diseases within their respective jurisdictions have furnished the data contained in their records.

It will be noted that some of the cities are apparently much more successful in obtaining reports of the notifiable diseases than are others. This may be due to the greater activity of their health departments, or to a greater interest in the public welfare on the part of their practicing physicians. The effective grasp of the control of disease possessed by the health departments in certain cities is indicated in many instances by the large number of cases reported as compared with the number of deaths registered from the same causes.